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- 3) Japan, U.S. vow in joint statement to maintain U.S. military deterrence

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Full)
January 20, 2010

The Japanese and U.S. governments yesterday released a joint statement of their foreign and defense ministers, as the day marked the 50th anniversary of the signing of their current security treaty. The joint statement proclaims that the bilateral alliance between Japan and the United States remains "the cornerstone of regional stability" contributing to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region beyond bilateral cooperation, specifying that

U.S. forces in Japan will maintain a deterrence. It indicates that the two countries will "deepen" their security cooperation in wide-ranging areas to deal jointly with global issues.

Japan and the United States have been strained over the pending issue of relocating the U.S. military's Futenma airfield in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture. As it stands, the joint statement aimed to show, both internally and externally, that the bilateral alliance is important and that the two countries have repaired their relations. In a foreign ministerial meeting held on Jan. 12 in Hawaii, the Japanese and U.S. governments agreed to shelve the Futenma issue and start talks in an effort to deepen the bilateral alliance. The joint statement released this time also reiterates the two countries' intention to step up their talks.

Meanwhile, the focus is on what to do about the presence of U.S. military bases in Japan. In this regard, the two countries vow in the joint statement to "mitigate the burden of base-hosting

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localities, including Okinawa." The joint statement says the two countries "endorse efforts to maintain (U.S.) deterrence, including an appropriate stationing of U.S. forces (in Japan)." However, it did not touch on the Futenma relocation issue.

In addition, the joint statement also pointed to such "new threats" as North Korea's nuclear programs and terrorism. It emphasizes the bilateral alliance's significance, saying the two countries will seek global peace and security without nuclear weapons while maintaining necessary deterrence." Concerning China, the joint statement says Japan and the United States will welcome that country's "constructive and responsible role in the international community."

4) Joint statement refers to consideration for Okinawa

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Abridged)
January 20, 2010

The Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (SCC), made up of foreign and defense ministers from Japan and the United States, met yesterday and released a joint statement, as the day marked the 50th anniversary of the revision of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. The joint statement gives high marks to the bilateral alliance between the two countries and its role. At the same time, it also says the two countries will deepen their alliance. In the joint statement, the Japanese and U.S. governments vow to "reduce the burden of base-hosting localities, including Okinawa," and endorse "efforts to maintain deterrence, including an appropriate stationing of U.S. forces, in a changing security environment," thereby indicating the two governments' intention to maintain U.S. military deterrence in Japan. In addition, the joint statement also incorporated efforts to seek "a world without nuclear weapons" as advocated by President Obama.

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada, meeting the press yesterday, indicated that the "Okinawa Base Issues Review Committee," a panel of officials from the government and ruling parties, should discuss where to relocate the U.S. military's Futenma airfield in Okinawa Prefecture from the perspective of maintaining deterrence. "We cannot ignore U.S. military deterrence when thinking about the Futenma replacement facility," Okada said. Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa, also meeting the press yesterday, pointed to the threat from North Korea and China's military expansion and underscored the presence of U.S. forces in Okinawa as a necessary deterrence.

5) Japan, U.S. groping for ways to deepen security alliance

NIKKEI (Page 3) (Full)
January 20, 2010

Although the Japanese and U.S. governments emphasize their determination to deepen the Japan-U.S. alliance and make it the "anchor of stability" in Asia and the Pacific in their joint statement (on the 50th anniversary of the signing of the security treaty), they are groping for concrete ways to do so. Tackling the

issue of the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station, the rise of China both politically and economically, and the North Korea issues will not be easy. The road to the redefinition of the 1996 Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security, which defined the role of the security alliance in the post-Cold War period, will be bumpy.

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At his news conference on Jan. 19, Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada said: "We will, of course, discuss developments in China," citing China as one topic in the talks for deepening the alliance. China has been at the center of changes in the security environment in Asia and the Pacific since the 1996 Joint Declaration. While there has been a persistent theory of China's threat, cooperation with China in dealing with North Korea's nuclear and missile issues is also indispensable. A delicate balance between caution and cooperation is crucial.

In the first place, the foundation of the Japan-U.S. alliance has been destabilized because Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has indicated his intention to reconsider the relocation site of the Futenma base, which had already been agreed upon by the two countries. Along with suspicions about Hatoyama's advocacy of an "equal Japan-U.S. relationship," the U.S. is increasingly distrustful of the Hatoyama administration. Hatoyama has declared that the "results" of the bilateral talks on deepening the alliance "will be presented to the people before the end of the year." The Japan-U.S. summit to be held when President Barack Obama visits Japan in November will be a critical juncture, but this will be premised on the rebuilding of the bilateral relationship of trust.

At his news conference, Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa said: "If the security alliance is strong, climate change and energy will also be discussed," indicating that a solution to the Futenma issue will contribute to the deepening of the overall alliance. How can this be reconciled with the Social Democratic Party and others advocating Futenma's relocation out of Japan or out of Okinawa? The first hurdle to deepening the alliance will be whether the government can meet the deadline of May for a solution to the Futenma issue.

6) Government considers dispatching SDF personnel to Haiti to provide additional medical assistance

ASAHI (Page 9) (Full)
January 20, 2010

The Hatoyama government has started looking into dispatching Self-Defense Force (SDF) medical personnel to Haiti to treat survivors of the devastating earthquake. Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa ordered the SDF on Jan. 18 to start preparations for sending a medical team and has already sent a fact-finding team of 12 members to the stricken area.

The government plans to send a medical team of 70 to 80 members who will engage in providing medical services to the injured and controlling infectious diseases. Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano said in a press conference on Jan. 18: "We have to carry out additional rescue measures. We hear the situation there is very serious." Once arrangements are completed, the government will dispatch a team composed mainly of medical officers by the end of this week from the Ground Self-Defense Force's Middle Army (in Itami City, Hyogo Prefecture).

7) Finance Minister Kan orders reinvestigation into documents related to Japan-U.S. secret pact

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
January 20, 2010

Finance Minister Naoto Kan revealed during a press conference

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yesterday that he has ordered his ministry to reinvestigate the documents related to a secret pact on the expenses to restore the

sites of former U.S. bases to their original condition during the reversion of Okinawa to Japanese administration. "According to my experience, old documents were generally kept at government offices," Kan said. In 1996 when he was serving as health and welfare ministry, Kan had his ministry disclose documents on drug-induced AIDS problems that had been kept at the ministry.

8) Yokohama District Court dismisses taxi driver's claim for compensation from government in U.S. sailor's assault case

AKAHATA (Page 15) (Full)
January 20, 2010

The Yokohama District Court handed down its verdict on Jan. 19 in the claim for compensation for damages from the government filed by Mr. Iwao Tabata, 64. Tabata, a taxi driver, was assaulted by a sailor of the Blue Ridge, the flagship of the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet based in Yokosuka, who was inebriated after an all-night-drinking binge, and suffered serious injuries in an incident in September 2006. He was suing for compensation on the grounds that U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ) failed to meet its responsibility for supervising the sailor. Chief Justice Toshimasa Fukami dismissed the plaintiff's case.

The verdict recognizes that the USFJ has power of supervision over U.S. service members off-duty. It also cites the fact that the USFJ recognizes that drinking at night is a cause of crimes by U.S. service members and has imposed restrictions on going out at night and drinking during off-duty hours and states: "It cannot be denied that if (the USFJ) had thoroughly enforced its regulations, the crime committed in this case could possibly have been avoided."

However, the sentence emphasizes that "it is impossible to restrict" the behavior of USFJ personnel "excessively." It cites the fact that the U.S. sailor had no previous record of disciplinary action or trouble caused by drinking, and therefore, the USFJ's failure to restrict the suspect "cannot be regarded as grossly irrational," denying that the USFJ failed to fulfill its supervisory responsibility.

Lawyer Hiroshi Takahashi gave the following comments: "It is commendable that the court recognizes that failure to strictly enforce regulations covering drinking at night to prevent crimes by U.S. service members resulted in the crime. However, its verdict that the USFJ did not fail to meet its supervisory responsibility is in discrepancy with the people's common sense."

9) Hatoyama to forgo attending Davos conference

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
January 20, 2010

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama decided yesterday to forgo attending the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (Davos conference), which will start on Jan. 27 in Davos, Switzerland, according to a government source. Hatoyama has given priority to voting on the second supplementary budget for fiscal 2009, which the government aims to pass before the end of this month.

10) China opposes bill on preservation of Okinotori Island

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NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
January 20, 2010

Referring to the Japanese government's decision to submit to the current regular Diet session a bill aimed at the preservation of the nation's outlying islands, including Okinotori Island, the southernmost island of Japan, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu said at a press conference yesterday: "The Japanese government's assertion of the expansion of territorial waters under its jurisdiction with Okinotori Island as a base does not conform with international law."

11) Prime Minister's replies during Jan. 19 House of Representatives

question-and-answer session

YOMIURI (Page 11) (Excerpts)
January 20, 2010

Economic measures

The economy is picking up, but it still lacks vitality. The government decided on a package of economic stimulus measures last December in the face of the high unemployment rate and the severe employment situation. Defining employment and the environment as priority areas, the government will enhance the nation's growth potential from the mid- to long-term perspective. The government will produce an overall picture of its growth strategy by around June.

Futenma relocation issue

The government will look into the matter based on the Japan-U.S. agreement and the policy agreement of the coalition government, while valuing the sentiments of the people in Okinawa. (The government and the ruling parties') study committee will reach a conclusion by May. The government will look into a wide-range of possible relocation sites without attaching any preconditions.

Three weapons-export principles

The three principles banning weapons exports are vital in light of the peace-oriented country's basic idea of avoiding international conflicts. The government will adhere to the policy of dealing with matters cautiously based on the three principles.

12) Panel on immigration policy recommends simplification of entry procedures, other preferential treatment for foreign experts

MAINICHI (Page 24) (Full)
January 20, 2010

Junichi Ishikawa

A private advisory body to the justice minister, the "council on immigration policy" submitted a report to Justice Minister Keiko Chiba on Jan. 19 recommending preferential treatment, such as extension of authorized period of stay, for foreigners with high levels of specialized knowledge and skills. This is aimed at increasing the incentive for them to come to Japan. The recommendations will be incorporated and institutionalized in the basic immigration policy plan to be drafted by the Ministry of

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Justice shortly.

The report recommends introducing a point system which will give preferential treatment in immigration procedures for foreigners obtaining a certain number of points assigned for educational background, income, linguistic ability, and so forth. Research achievements and other categories will be given additional points, and a foreigner certified to have "advanced expertise" should enjoy such preferential treatment as simplification of immigration procedures and authorized period of stay of up to five years.

The panel recommends that the entry into Japan of foreigners in the following categories should be encouraged: researchers and other academics; doctors, lawyers, and other professionals with advanced expertise and skills; and business managers and experts in management and administration. The UK, Australia, Canada, and other countries already have point systems in place. The report also recommends that the limit of authorized stay for dentists, nurses, and other foreigners with government certified medical licenses, currently set at four to seven years, should be abolished, as in the case of doctors.

13) PNP final draft proposes reforming current structure of postal group into three-company system

YOMIURI (Page 9) (Excerpt)
January 20, 2010

The People's New Party (PNP) revealed yesterday its final draft plan for reforming the Japan Post Group prior to the start of drafting a postal reform bill (tentative name). Under the plan, the current five-company system under Japan Post Holdings Co. would be changed into a three-company system in which Japan Post Bank Co. and Japan Post Insurance Co. would be placed under a holding company to be formed by integrating Japan Post Holdings, Japan Post Service Co., and Japan Post Network Co. In its initial draft, the PNP had presented two ideas - a one-company system and a three-company system, but the party has withdrawn the one-company system.

14) Tanigaki expresses opposition to granting local suffrage to foreign residents

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
January 20, 2010

Liberal Democratic Party President Sadakazu Tanigaki, appearing on a BS Fuji-TV program last night, announced that his party will oppose a bill to grant local suffrage (voting rights) to permanent foreign residents in Japan. He said: "When looking at the moves to leave the question of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station up to a local election (Nago mayoral election), I wonder if it is a good idea to grant local suffrage." He thus expressed his intention to require the LDP lawmakers to vote according to party policy.

15) Five LDP lawmakers to form new policy study group

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
January 20, 2010

Five Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lawmakers, including Yuji Yamamoto, former minister of financial services, yesterday announced

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that they would form a new policy study group, "Nozomi," advocating constitutional reform. Yamamoto said, "We want to support LDP President Sadakazu Tanigaki and participate in attacking the Democratic Party of Japan." Besides Yamamoto, the new group includes Ichiro Kamoshita, Keiji Furuya, Yoshihisa Furukawa, and Seiichi Eto. Ryota Takeda decided against joining the group.

16) Ozawa agrees to undergo questioning over land deal scandal

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Excerpt)
January 20, 2010

Democratic Party of Japan Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa has notified prosecutors that he will accept their request for questioning over a shady land purchase by Rikuzan-kai, Ozawa's political fund management group, according to informed sources. The prosecutors suspect that the land deal violated the Political Funds Control Law. The two sides will now arrange a date for the questioning. The prosecutors have also asked Ozawa's wife to voluntarily submit to questioning as an unsworn witness.

17) Hatoyama: "It is natural as a peer to believe in his innocence," in replying to Diet questions over Ozawa's land deal scandal

ASAHI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
January 20, 2010

Asked about the propriety of his decision to keep Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa in his post, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama replied in a plenary session at the House of Representatives yesterday: "I have trusted Mr. Ozawa as our party secretary general up until now, so it is the principle stance as a peer to believe in his innocence if he claims that he is." Ozawa's former aides were arrested on suspicion of violating the Political Funds Control Law.

Hatoyama reiterated in the interpellation session that since the case involving Ozawa's political fund management organization is under investigation by prosecutors, "it is necessary to calmly watch

the development of the investigation." He also said: "I have no intention of (criticizing) the prosecutors' investigation or exercising my authority." He added that he was not considering an investigation by the party.

18) JAL applies for court-administered bankruptcy protection and reorganization: ETIC to support carrier's turnaround; flight operations to be continued

NIKKEI (Top play) (Lead para.)
January 20, 2010

The financially-troubled Japan Airlines (JAL) and two of its subsidiaries on Jan. 19 announced that they applied for protection with the Tokyo District Court under the Corporate Bankruptcy Law and received on the same day a court decision to commence the procedures. The JAL group's total liabilities stand at 2.32 trillion yen, the highest-ever amount for a company outside the financial sector. The Enterprise Turnaround Initiative Corporation of Japan (ETIC) has formally decided to support JAL's reconstruction. The corporate turnaround body and the Development Bank of Japan (DBJ) will provide the carrier a credit line worth 900 billion yen in public funds. Following these decisions, the Tokyo Stock Exchange announced that it will designate JAL stock as a liquidation issue

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for a month starting on the same day and delist it on Feb. 20.

19) Delta Air Lines offers full support to JAL

MAINICHI (Page 8) (Full)
January 20, 2010

Following Japan Airline's (JAL) application for a petition for protection with the court under the Corporate Rehabilitation Law, Delta Air Lines of the U.S. which is aiming at forming an alliance with JAL, and SkyTeam, to which Delta Air Lines belongs, on Jan. 19 issued comments noting that they will offer full support to JAL and extend as much financial aid and support as possible to the carrier. American Airlines of the U.S., a member of OneWorld, to which JAL belongs, also released a statement saying that it will continue to cooperate with JAL.

20) Subsidy system for eco-friendly-car buyers to be applied to U.S. vehicles as well

NIKKEI (Page 7) (Full)
January 20, 2010

The U.S. has been calling on Japan to review its subsidy system for buyers of Japanese-made eco-friendly cars, complaining that the system is excluding U.S. automakers. In connection with this, the government on Jan. 19 announced that it would add imported cars that are not covered under Japan's system for designating vehicle types to the list of vehicles eligible for the subsidy system. To be precise, buyers of vehicles imported under the basic screening system that targets imported cars will become eligible for tax credits.

No U.S. vehicles have thus far been covered by the system. However, three or four types of vehicles or about 700 units will become eligible for subsidies after the revision.

Under the eco-friendly vehicle subsidy system, up to 250,000 yen will be provided to buyers of a vehicle that meet the fuel efficiency standard set under the designated model system. The basic screening system is applied to approximately 30 percent of U.S. vehicles imported by Japan. Following the review of the system, whether to apply the eco-friendly vehicle subsidy system to U.S. cars will be determined on the basis of whether the vehicles meet the subsidy standards by converting the U.S.-style fuel efficiency value determined on a mileage-per-gallon basis into kilometers per liter under the system for designating vehicle types.

Concerning this issue, U.S. Secretary of State Clinton in talks with Foreign Minister Okada called for a corrective measure, saying:

"There is growing concern on the issue in Congress." Resolutions on the inequality of the system have been submitted to the Senate and the House of Representatives. Referring to the review of the system, Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Masayuki Naoshima said: "There is something unclear regarding whether the fuel efficiency system adopted by the U.S. is really correct or not. However, the government has expanded the vehicles eligible for the subsidy system from the viewpoint of stimulating the economy. We did not handle this issue as a political issue."

ZUMWALT